

## WEXFORD - COUNTY GEOLOGICAL SITE REPORT

<b>NAME OF SITE</b>	<b>Wexford Harbour</b>
Other names used for site	<i>Cuan Loch Garman, The Slobs</i>
<b>IGH THEME</b>	<b>IGH13 Coastal Geomorphology</b>
<b>TOWNLAND(S)</b>	<b>The Raven, North East Slob, Big Island, North West Slob, Ardavan, Burgess, Tincone, Ferrybank South, Townparks, Maudlintown, Rocksborough, Strandfield, Drinagh North, Drinagh South, Bogganstown Lower, Island, Hopeland, Burrow, Warren Lower</b>
<b>NEAREST TOWN/VILLAGE</b>	<b>Wexford</b>
<b>SIX INCH MAP NUMBER</b>	<b>37, 38, 42, 43</b>
<b>ITM CO-ORDINATES</b>	<b>708500E 621100N (centre of harbour)</b>
<b>1:50,000 O.S. SHEET NUMBER</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>GSi BEDROCK 1:100,000 SHEET NO.</b>	<b>23</b>

### Outline Site Description

Wexford Harbour is a wide coastal embayment, flanked on either side by long sand spits and sandy beaches, and incorporating wide expanses of coastal flats.

### Geological System/Age and Primary Rock Type

The feature has been forming in the Holocene Period following the last glaciation, and the bay itself hosts soft mud, silt and sand sediment washed into it during that time. It is likely that the macro-structure of the harbour dates back beyond the Quaternary (Ice Age) to the Palaeogene Period.

### Main Geological or Geomorphological Interest

The bay is almost perfectly symmetrical and is bordered on the northwest by the Slaney River Estuary, which feeds freshwater into the harbour. The site is divided between the natural estuarine habitats of Wexford Harbour, the reclaimed polders known as the North and South 'Slobs', and the tidal section of the River Slaney.

Shallow marine water dominates the harbour, but at low tide extensive areas of intertidal flats are exposed. These vary from rippled sands in exposed areas to sandy-muds in the more sheltered areas, especially at Hopeland and the inner estuary to the west of Wexford bridge.

Salt marshes fringe the intertidal flats, especially in the sheltered areas such as Hopeland and towards Castlebridge. The Slobs are two flat areas of farmland, mainly arable and pasture grassland, empoldered behind 19<sup>th</sup> century seawalls. The lands are drained by a network of channels which flow into two central channels, in parts several hundred metres in width. Water from the channels is pumped into the sea with electric pumps.

### Site Importance - County Geological Site; recommended for Geological NHA

The extensive flats and the associated beach, dune and slack features, as well as the surrounding beaches, salt marshes and sand spits, make Wexford Harbour a textbook locality for the recognition of coastal depositional features. The Harbour is already a proposed NHA (pNHA 000712, Wexford Slobs and Harbour), SPA and SAC for biodiversity reasons, and the geodiversity of an active sedimentation system should be highlighted in promotion of this.

### Management/promotion issues

The location of the features of interest makes them easily accessible, and Wexford Harbour is a popular recreational area given the number of fine beaches and bird-watching sites around its perimeter. Information boards at the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve are worthy additions to the site, and explain the features' associated habitats, flora and fauna. The geological formation of the features, and geomorphological processes taking place within the harbour, could be highlighted in any future literature produced on the area.



View across the mud, silt and sand flats, on the North West Slob.



Sand beach at the edge of Wexford Harbour, near Ardcavan.



View northeast from Rosslare Burrow across the Coal Channel.

